

# Mr. Franchot's Independence

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## Our choice for comptroller in Maryland

**W**ILLIAM DONALD Schaefer, former mayor of Baltimore, former governor and Maryland's current comptroller, has been a colossus of Maryland politics for decades — a refreshingly forthright public servant and a stand-up guy. His effectiveness in office and compassion for constituents earned him the affection and admiration of many Marylanders, which is exactly why so many of them have been disappointed by his obnoxious and embarrassing statements in recent years. We wish he had decided to retire with dignity at the age of 84 rather than seek reelection, for we cannot support him again.

His Democratic primary challengers are Del. **Peter V.R. Franchot** of Montgomery County and Janet S. Owens, the Anne Arundel county executive. Our choice is Mr. Franchot, whose occasionally strident partisanship is outweighed by his smarts and independent-mindedness, qualities that would make him a fine comptroller.

The comptroller is Maryland's chief tax collector and overseer of its multibillion-dollar pension fund. Just as important, the comptrol-

ler serves as one of three members (with the governor and state treasurer) of the Board of Public Works, a virtual mini-legislature charged with passing final judgment on practically every major contract let by the state.

As a member of the General Assembly's powerful Appropriations Committee and chairman of its transportation and environment subcommittee, Mr. Franchot, a 20-year veteran lawmaker, has exercised sound judgment. He has been a tough advocate for funding public education and an outspoken opponent of expanding slot machine gambling. It is safe to say that if Mr. Franchot is elected comptroller, he will exercise a salutary independence no matter who is governor. By contrast, we doubt that Mrs. Owens, though an able county executive, would add as much to the mix, particularly at the Board of Public Works.

In the Republican primary for comptroller, the most plausible of the four badly underfunded and relatively unknown candidates is **Mark M. Spradley**, a money manager in Montgomery County.